Mrs. Fiske Believes She Will Never Produce Another Dramatic Failure, Because She Is True to Herself.

By Charles Darnton.

IT'S a wise woman that knows her own mind. If you have never discovered her, you have still to meet Mrs. Fiske. Seek her not in the automobile parade, along the fur-trimmed avenue, at the steam-heated "reception," nor at the indigestible afternoon tea. She is never found outside the theatre—if she can help it.

To find her there in a mood as bright as the afternoon sun itself makes you believe that salvation is free, even if "Salvation Nell" isn't. Another Mrs. Fiske, older yet equally gracious, offers you her chair as she rises to go. A ripple of laughter runs along the window seat in the little "office" of the Hackett Theatre and with it comes:

"Mother says 'Be seated,' because she is trying to show off. She means 'Sit down,' don't you, mother?"

The elder Mrs. Fiske stands corrected, but only for a moment. While the laughter is still warm she says "Good afternoon," and takes with her young Mr. Sheldon, the author of "Salvation Nell." And now the woman who knows her mind gives you a piece of it.

Saw Poetry in It.

"An hour after I had read the play I accepted it," she tells you, the white flowers on her black turban nodding confirmation.

Like others who are asking the question, you are curious to know what prompted her to produce "Salvation Nell."

"It was the poetry of the play that appealed to me most of all—what some of the reviewers and many others seem to have missed altogether. Of course the truth of Mr. Sheldon's play, its faithful 'realism'—to use a stock term—impressed me more and more as I went along. I had barely finished reading the last act when my decision was made. The truth, the poetry, the spirituality of 'Salvation Nell' won me at once. I fail to see that the sordid things in it have greater power than its poetry, and I am glad that it has been called a 'Divine Comedy of the Slums,' for that is what it seems to me."

It has never occurred to Mrs. Fiske to be "shocked" by the brutal facts of the case, and she smiles with you, not at you, as she says:

"I'm afraid I'm a person who can't be shocked. At any rate, Maeterlinck's essay on 'Sincerity' and the Old Testament haven't shocked me, and so I don't see why I should be shocked by 'Salvation Nell,' do you?"

Her smile goes on a laughing holiday, but in the next breath she is as serious as the Recording Angel.

"I am never shocked by the simple truths of life," she adds, her eyes shining through her black veil like two stars, "though I must confess we were all shocked the other night when several fashionable, middle-aged women in a box—one of them of illustrious family—plainly showed they were more than half intoxicated. This has been the only 'shocking' incident connected with 'Salvation Nell.'"

It is only a short step from "society" to the slums, but you learn that Mrs. Fiske did not go to them for "atmosphere."

"No," she answers, "but I know New York, and I know something about the slums. I've often gone to 'Little Italy' in the summer time. It is like Naples—the sights, the sounds, and last but not least the smells. But it was not necessary to go to the slums for the sake of 'Salvation Nell.' A little imagination goes a long way in the realistic drama. The stage takes a broad view of life."

At the same time, you suggest, the public may seem narrow-minded.

Public Too Broad-Minded.

"Not at all," declares Mrs. Fiske. "I should be inclined to say it is too broad-minded, or, rather, too broad in its tastes. The suggestiveness of many sexual 'society plays' and the frank vulgarity of others could hardly be tolerated, it seems to me, without the easy indifference of the public toward the stage. But it has always been so, more or less, I fancy, don't you? In Kemble's day and Garrick's, no less than in our own, complaint was made about vulgarity of taste, and in Sheridan's time the same struggle went on between the good and the bad. I cannot see that conditions have changed."

You attempt to set up the fact that at any rate it is the day of the realistic play, but Mrs. Fiske meets your arguments with:

"I'm not sure I believe even that. When I was a girl they put on very realistic plays, and I have seen many since then. Mr. A. M. Palmer was nothing if not realistic in his productions. Do you remember 'Alabama'? I remember it as one of Mr. Palmer's most wonderful productions. In my opinion he was the greatest manager this country has ever known—I don't think America has ever appreciated how great he was. Somehow he missed the popular recognition Mr. Daly got. Perhaps it was because Mr. Daly was truer to the sentiment of the past."

The next question strikes the hour—the play of to-day.

"I believe in to-day and in living up to it," Mrs. Fiske responds. "Aren't the problems with which men and women are struggling to-day of more interest to us than those contained in 'Electra' and other plays that deal with things dead and gone? To-day, like the poor, is always with us. And why shouldn't the poor have a place in our plays as well as in our hearts? They are much more interesting than the well-to-do, comfortable people."

The Poor Do Not Pose.

For a moment you listen to her silence. Then:

"If we have our tragedies they are usually of our own making, due to our vanities, our selfishness or our fantasies. But the tragedies of the poor are real. People who are always cold in winter and hungry most of the time know life in all its hard reality, and they face it as best they can. There is no pose about them. But the rest of us, consciously or otherwise, affect some kind of pose. We can't help it."

This from perhaps the only wholly unaffected actress on our stage is a confession good for anybody's soul. You associate her sympathy for the under-dog with her love for "Salvation Nell," but she smilingly assures you that you are wrong again.

"Sympathy had nothing to do with it," she insists. "As I have said, it was the poetry of the play that appealed to me. I really shouldn't talk about Mr. Sheldon at all, for I consider him a genius. I don't believe his work is the result of observation, I don't believe he observes things—he just absorbs them. He couldn't write an insincere line. I am so interested in his play that for the first time in my life I am glad to go to the theatre at 7 o'clock. Before, it was all in the night's work, but now each day I look forward to my work with an eagerness that really amounts to enthusiasm. The struggle between the spiritual power in Nell and that poor dumb brute Jim seems as compelling every night as it did the first. The love scene in the last act between the woman who has come to realize what life means and the big, undeveloped, uncomprehending child Jim I consider one of the most exquisite things in modern dramatic literature. I know this sounds extravagant, but I feel it is so. And that is why I know that my acting on the first night of the play did Mr. Sheldon a great injustice. That scene wasn't played at all—not as it should have been, I mean. You must read it to appreciate its simple, beautiful poetry."

You have only to say that you followed it on the first night with a smile on your lips and a few nights later with a lump in your throat to have her exclaim:

Her Bad First Nights.

"Oh, please say that in print! It justifies Mr. Sheldon and it helps to exonerate me. I usually fail to bring out the best in a play at a first-night performance. I don't know why—it's not nervousness wholly, nor consciousness of the mechanics of acting—I don't know what it is. Some actors are said to be particularly good on first nights, but I simply can't do my best for some reason or other. That's why it is unfair to have criticism based on a first-night performance. It's unjust to the author, to the public and to the critics themselves. I remember what a wretched failure 'Becky Sharp' was on its first night. The critics quite truthfully said that things had gone wrong, and we were so thoroughly convinced that the play was beyond all hope that we got together the very next day and discussed plans for a new production. But to our surprise the public kept coming in constantly increasing numbers, and before the end of the week we found ourselves with an enormous success on our hands. On Saturday of that week a rather amusing thing happened. One critic who had utterly condemned both play and actors came around to the matinee to find the house so packed that he couldn't get his nose in the door. He looked so surprised, I was told, that my amusement over the incident has never let me forget it."

Mrs. Fiske is keenly interested in the subject of first-night reform. "Let's talk about that," she proposes. She is willing to talk about anything but herself. When your question draws near to her she hurries away from it. Click! goes the lock on her tongue, and you find yourself caught in a trap of silence. She is as impersonal as art. Experience has taught you this, and so you content yourself with the question:

"How would you avoid the first-night evil, Mrs. Fiske?"

An Unavoidable Evil.

"I really don't know," she confesses. "But would it not be fairer to all concerned to have only reports of first-night performances and let the criticisms come later? Or why not do as the French do, give a performance for invited guests and the critics, of which no report is printed—the criticisms to be written after a later public performance? It seems to me there are several feasible plans that would be much better than the present system—fairer so far as the judgment of the critics, the information of the public and the merits of the play and the acting are concerned. Meanwhile, I just accept my bad first nights as one of the unavoidable evils of life. I simply say, 'Yes, I'm awfully bad, I know, but to-morrow I'll try to do better.'"

"Does a first night ever frighten you into thinking a good play a failure?"

"Not now. I've learned to know myself, and I don't think I shall ever produce another real out-and-out failure. I can't make the blunders now in choosing a play that I might have made in the past. I feel instinctively now what I should do, and so I think I can never go wholly wrong in the selection of a play."

This amazing statement causes you to ask: "Do you consider the taste of the public in choosing a play?"

Not Influenced by Public.

"Oh, no, never, never!" she exclaims. "How could I? To guess at the public's taste would bring about deterioration and possibly destruction. I must do what I feel would be best for me, not what I might imagine the public would like. One must have a standard, a goal of one's own."

"And yours is—?"

"Mine is to be true to myself and to art, I may add—though that sounds fearfully pretentious, doesn't it?"

She laughs again as you ask: "Did you stop to think twice before getting into the rags of a scrubwoman?"

"Not at all," she peals. "In fact, it is a great relief not to have to bother about furbelows. I like Nell's clothes because they are a part of her—real, like herself."

And real, like some one else, you think, as you shake a firm, strong hand in good-by.

MRS FISKE as "SALVATION NELL"

H. Harmon

Hints for the Home

Stuffed Tenderloin.

PROCURE a pork loin roast. Do not remove the tenderloin, but slit it, and stuff with dry dressing made of stale crumbs highly seasoned with salt, pepper and sage. Roast in usual manner, and serve with potatoes roasted in pan with meat, brown gravy, and apple sauce.

English Beefsteak.

WHEN a steak is broiled over the coals the good fat is lost. When a steak is broiled in a hot skillet the kitchen is filled with smoke. The English method avoids both the above conditions and gives a better result. Have a porterhouse steak cut from an inch to an inch and a half thick. Ask the butcher to add a piece of clear suet two inches square. Shape the steak to fit the skillet, placing the suet in the centre as nearly as possible. Have the fire moderate but steady, and when the skillet is hot enough to sizzle sharply carefully lay the steak in it. If wanted rare done turn at the end of five minutes, if well done turn at the end of eight minutes. Turn carefully with a broad bladed knife (do not pierce with a fork), and allow to cook another five or eight minutes. If the heat is just right the upper surface will remain perfectly dry at the end of eight minutes, and after being turned the other surface will remain the same. When the juices of the meat ooze out the steak is ruined. Dish the steak on a hot platter and pour over it the fat from the skillet. Serve on warm plates.

Broiled Quail With Bacon.

WIPE six quail carefully with a damp cloth, but do not wash; split them, break the long bones and season with a mixture of salt, pepper and best salad oil, the oil being an absolute necessity on account of the absence of fat in the muscular tissues of game. Have a hot broiling oven or a clear fire and broil for six minutes on each side. Arrange six slices of nicely browned toast on a hot platter, place the birds on them and baste with a mixture made by creaming one ounce of butter, flavored with a half teaspoonful of finely chopped parsley, the juice of a half lemon, and, if desired, a few grains of nutmeg. Garnish with delicately broiled thin slices of bacon and watercress.

Immortal Interviews -:-

No. 8—Wise Old Methuselah on the Fun of Being an Aged Beau

By Helen Rowland.

HELEN ROWLAND.

"LOVELY weather!" remarked Mr. Methuselah genially, as he ushered me into his private library and dismissed his pretty stenographer with a nod. "I declare, I feel just like a boy!"

"You LOOK just like a boy," I returned, regarding his curly toupe and his smooth-shaven chin in astonishment. "But I always thought you were—were"——

"An old fossil?" suggested Methuselah, with a laugh. "No, indeed. A chap can't afford to grow musty and stout and seedy in these days. It requires such strenuous labor to keep up with you ladies," and he made me a graceful bow.

"Thanks, awfully!" I murmured, with a blush, "but a man is only as old as he feels, you know."

"Nonsense!" and Methuselah shrugged his perfectly padded shoulders contemptuously. "That old fallacy doesn't hold good any longer. This is the golden age of woman—and not the dotage of man. The time has passed when an old fellow could go on marrying and making love, and fancying himself fascinating after he had lost his front hair and acquired embonpoint. The old horse who tries to act like a colt receives a severe shock when he discovers that a woman of forty regards him with daughterly respect, and that a twenty-year-old girl regards him as a grandfatherly bore. The women have turned the tables on us, madame. It's the lady who is as young as her feelings, and her beauty specialist can keep her so. And when you hear of a December and May wedding nowadays it's the woman who is December and the man who is May."

"Yes," I sighed. "Look at May Irwin, and Ellen Terry, and Lady Randolph Churchill, and Mrs. Leslie Carter, and Mrs. Langtry and all the other beauties in their second-summer, who have gone direct to the cradle for husbands."

"And got them!" rejoined Methuselah, sadly. "It's the mature woman who picks all the plums off the matrimonial tree, while the bread-and-butter girl is sitting at home wondering where all the wandering boys may be. In other words, the golden age of woman nowadays is Middle Age. No woman begins to be interesting until she is thirty-five, and any woman can be a charmer up to fifty provided she keeps her figure."

"And a good income," I finished, sarcastily. "One of the subtle attractions about a middle-aged woman is that she is usually either a widow with a tidy little fortune or a professional woman with a tidy little salary, which makes her an asset instead of an encumbrance."

"Besides," concluded Methuselah determinedly, "she's not like a fluffy little thing that you can see through as easily as window glass. She's mysterious and complex."

"Like—like stained glass," I suggested.

"Yes," agreed Methuselah enthusiastically. "Did you ever notice how much more fascinating the stained glass windows are than the plain ones—simply because you can't see what's behind them. That's the way with a middle-aged woman. You can't see what's behind her words and actions and expressions. She keeps you guessing."

"And that's the only way to keep you at all!" I declared. "But a middle-aged man doesn't keep anybody guessing, because everybody knows that his emotions have been worn to a frazzle and that he hasn't an illusion under the sun, and that his heart is dried up and his sentiments moth-eaten and his love-making a mechanical habit!"

"Ah, well," sighed Methuselah, "a man lives about twice as fast as a woman; and a youth of twenty-five is as old as a woman of thirty-five, and has had more experience and more wear and tear on his heartstrings. But a woman sips the wine of life slowly, and it is just beginning to go to her head at thirty."

"And to make her silly at forty," I rejoined. "And that reminds me of something I wanted to ask you. When IS a girl no longer a girl?"

"When she no longer FEELS like one," returned Methuselah promptly. "Not when she begins to get gray, but when she begins to get easily bored; not when she loses her teeth, but when she loses her illusions; not when she loses her figure, but when she loses her enthusiasm; not when she ceases to interest men, but when men cease to interest her."

"You mean," I inquired, "when she would rather go to bed at half-past 9 and get a good solid night's rest than to sit up to talk to an Apollo Belvidere?"

"Exactly," acquiesced Methuselah—"when she reaches that point of indifference where she doesn't consider the

"Picking All the Plums."

dance worth the tired feeling, nor the champagne worth the headache"——

"Nor love worth the heartache"——

"And when there is no longer any novelty in a flirtation"——

"Nor any thrill in a kiss."

"Yes," agreed Methuselah, "and that's when a boy ceases to be a boy."

"But he never seems to know it!" I retorted, sadly.

"Ah, well," sighed Methuselah, "if old ladies will be girls, why shouldn't old gentlemen be boys? And that reminds me," he added, hastily glancing at his watch, "that I have a—er—luncheon engagement. Actually you've kept me so entertained that I'd forgotten it. But," and he brightened visibly, "I can telephone her, and if you will do me the honor"——

"Now, Mr. Methuselah!" I protested.

"Say!" exclaimed Methuselah, enthusiastically, "you have stunning hair!"——

"I really must be going!" I exclaimed, rising hastily.

"And attractive eyes," continued Methuselah; "won't you just come this once for"——

"My dear boy!" I cried, turning on him suddenly. "I'm too old!"

"What!"

"Too old to interest anybody over six hundred—or even over sixty," I finished. "I like them sixteen."

"Well, so do I," acknowledged Mr. Methuselah with a sigh, as he bowed me out of the door and rang for the pretty stenographer.

Manful.

When a man neglects a duty, he says: "I was too busy;" but usually he was too lazy.—Atchison Globe.

A Romance of Mystery, Love and Adventure. -:- THE BLACK BAG -:- By Louis Joseph Vance, Author of "The Brass Bowl," "The Private War," Etc.

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING INSTALMENTS

Philip Kirkwood, a young Californian, is stranded, almost penniless, in London. He falls in with an adventurer named Calendar, whose daughter, Dorothy, wins the American's affections. Under Kirkwood's escort, Dorothy goes to a deserted house by night to get for her father a mysterious black Gladstone bag hidden there. A man grapples with Kirkwood on the stairs of this house and Kirkwood knocks him senseless. Dorothy and her father depart from England on a ship whose name Kirkwood cannot learn. Returning to the deserted house in search of a purse he had dropped in the struggle, Kirkwood resuscitates the unconscious man. A woman enters the house. She is Mrs. Hallam, a confederate of Calendar's, with whom the latter has apparently quarreled. The man with whom Kirkwood fought on the stairs is her son, Frederick. Kirkwood returns with the mother and son, in a cab, to the Hallam house.

CHAPTER VIII.

(Continued.)

Mme. L'Intrigante.

YOUNG Hallam was resting his empty blond head against the cushions and seemed to doze, but, as the carriage rolled past the frequent street-lights, Kirkwood could see that the eyes of Mrs. Hallam were steadily directed to his face.

His outward composure was tempered by some amusement, by more admiration; the woman's eyes were very handsome, even when hardest and most cold. It was not easy to conceive of her as being the mother of a son so immaturely mature. Why, she must have been at least thirty-eight or nine! One wondered; she did not look it. * * *

The carriage stopped before a house with lighted windows. Eccles jumped down from the box and scurried to open the front door. The radiance of a hall lamp was streaming out into the misty night when he returned to release his employers.

They were returned to Craven street. "One more lap round the track!" mused Kirkwood. "Wonder will the next take me back to Bermondsey Old Stairs!"

At Mrs. Hallam's direction, Eccles ushered him into the smoking-room, on the ground floor in the rear of the dwelling, there to wait while she helped her son upstairs and to bed. He sighed with pleasure at the first glimpse of its luxurious but informal comforts, and threw himself carelessly into a heavily padded lounging-chair, dropping one knee over the other and lighting the last of his expensive cigars, with a sensation of undiluted gratitude; as one coming to rest in the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Over his shoulder a homelike illumination was cast by an electric reading-lamp shaded with red silk. At his feet brass fire-dogs winked sleepily in the fluttering blaze of a well tended stove. The walls were hung with deep red, the doors and divans upholstered in the same restful shade. In one corner an old clock ticked soberly. The atmosphere would have proved a potent invitation to reverie, if not to sleep—he was very sleepy—but for the confusion in the house.

In its chambers, through the halls, on the stairs, there were hurryings and scurryings of feet and skirts, confused with murmuring voices. Presently in an adjoining room Philip Kirkwood heard a maid servant wrestling hopefully with that most exasperating of modern time-saving devices, the telephone as countenanced by our English cousins. Her patience and determination won his approval, but availed nothing for her purpose; in the outcome the telephone triumphed and the maid gave up the unequal contest.

Later a butler entered the room; a short and sturdy fellow, extremely ill at ease. Drawing a small taboret to the side of Kirkwood's chair, he placed thereon a tray, deferentially imparting the information that "Missis 'Allam 'ad thought 'ow as Mister Kirkwood might care for a bit of supper."

"Please thank Mrs. Hallam for me," Kirkwood's gratified eyes ranged the laden tray. There were sandwiches, biscuit, cheese and a pot of black coffee, with sugar and cream. "It was very kindly thought of," he added.

"Very good, sir; thank you, sir."

The man turned to go, shuffling soundlessly. Kirkwood was, suddenly impressed with his evasiveness; ever since he had entered the room his countenance had seemed turned from the guest.

"Eccles!" he called sharply, at a venture.

The butler halted, thunderstruck. "Ye-es, s-sir?"

"Turn round, Eccles; I want a look at you."

Eccles faced him unwillingly, with a stolid front, but shifty eyes. Kirkwood glanced him up and down, grinning.

"Thank you, Eccles; I'll remember you now. You'll remember me, too, won't you? You're a bad actor, aren't you, Eccles?"

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," mumbled the man unhappily, and he took instant advantage of the implied permission to go.

Intensely diverted by the recollection of Eccles's abortive attempt to stop him at the door of No. 9, and wondering—now that he came to think of it—why, precisely, young Hallam had deemed it necessary to travel with a bodyguard and adopt such furtive methods to enter into as well as to obtain what was asserted to be his own property, Kirkwood turned active attention to the lunch.

Thoughtfully he poured himself a cup of coffee, swallowing it hot and black as it came from the silver pot; then munched the sandwiches.

It was kindly thought of, this early morning repast; Mrs. Hallam seemed more and more a remarkable woman with each phase of her character that she chose to disclose. At odds with him, she yet took time to think of his creature needs!

What could be her motive—not in feeding him, but in involving her name and fortune in an affair so strangely flavored? * * * This opened up a desert waste of barren speculation. "What's anybody's motive who figures in this thundering dime novel?" demanded the American, almost contemptuously. And—for the hundredth time—gave it up; the day should declare it, if so hap he lived to see the day—a distant one he made no doubt. The only clear fact in his befogged and bemussed mentality was that he was at once "broke" and in this business up to his ears. Well, he'd see it through; he'd nothing better to do, and—there was the girl, Dorothy, whose eyes and lips he had but to close his own eyes to see again as vividly as though she stood before him; Dorothy, whose unspoiled sweetness stood out in vivid relief against this moil and toil of conspiracy like a star of evening shining clear in a stormy sky.

"Poetic simile; I'm going fast," conceded Kirkwood; but he did not smile. It was becoming quite too serious a matter for laughter. For her sake he was in the game "for keeps," especially in view of the fact that everything—his own heart's inclination included—seemed to conspire to keep him in it. Of course he hoped for nothing in return; a pauper who turns squire-of-dames with matrimonial intent is open to the designation "penniless adventurer." No; whatever service he might be to the girl would be ample recompense to him for his labors. And afterward he'd go his way in peace; she'd soon forget him—if she hadn't already. Women (he propounded gravely) are queer—there's no telling anything about them!

One of the most unreadable specimens of the sex on which he pronounced this highly original dictum entered the room just then, and he found himself at once out of his chair and his dream, bowing.

"Mrs. Hallam."

The woman nodded and smiled graciously. "Eccles has attended to your needs, I hope? Please don't stop smoking." She sank into an arm-chair on the other side of the hearth and, probably by accident, out of the radius of illumination from the lamp; sitting sidewise, one knee above the other, her white arms immaculate against the sombre background of shadowed crimson.

She was very handsome indeed, just then, though a keener light might have proved less flattering.

"Now, Mr. Kirkwood?" she opened briskly, with a second intimate and friendly nod; and paused, her pose receptive.

Kirkwood sat down again, smiling good-natured appreciation of her unprejudiced attitude.

"Your son, Mrs. Hallam?"——

"Oh, Freddie's doing well enough. * * * Freddie," she explained, "has a delicate constitution and has seen little of the world. Such melodrama as to-night's is apt to shock him severely. We must make allowances, Mr. Kirkwood."

Kirkwood grinned again, a trace unsympathetically; he was unable to simulate any enthusiasm on the subject of poor Freddie, whom he had sized up with passable acumen as a spoiled and coddled child, completely under the thumb of an extremely clever mother.

"Yes," he responded, vaguely; "he'll be quite fit for a night's sleep, I dare say."

The woman was watching him keenly beneath her lowered lashes. "I think," she said, deliberately, "that it is time we came to an understanding."

Kirkwood agreed—"Yes?" affably.

"I purpose being perfectly straightforward. To begin with, I don't place you, Mr. Kirkwood. You are an unknown quantity, a new factor. Won't you please tell me what you are and * * * Are you a friend of Mr. Calendar's?"

"I think I may lay claim to that honor, though"—to Kirkwood's way of seeing things some little frankness on his own part would be essential if they were to get on—"I hardly know him, Mrs. Hallam. I had the pleasure of meeting him only this afternoon."

She knitted her brows over this statement.

"That, I assure you, is the truth," he laughed.

"But * * * I really don't understand."

"Nor I, Mrs. Hallam. Calendar aside, I am Philip Kirkwood, American, resident abroad for some years, a native of San Francisco, of a certain age, unmarried, by profession a poor painter."

"And?"——

"Beyond that? I presume I must tell you, though I confess I'm in doubt" * * * He hesitated, weighing candor in the balance with discretion.

"But whom are you for? Are you in George Calendar's pay?"

"Heaven forfend!"—piously. "My sole interest at the present moment is to unravel a most entrancing mystery"——

"Entitled 'Dorothy Calendar'! Of course. You've known her long?"

"Eight hours, I believe," he admitted gravely, "less than that, in fact."

"Miss Calendar's interests will not suffer through anything you may tell me."

"Whether they will or no, I see I must swing a looser tongue, or you'll be showing me the door."

The woman shook her head, amused. "Not until," she told him significantly.

"Very well, then." And he launched into an abridged narrative of the night's events, as he understood them, touching lightly on his own circumstances, the real poverty which had brought him back to Craven street by way of Frognall. "And there you have it all, Mrs. Hallam."

She sat in silent musing. Now and again he caught the glint of her eyes and knew that he was being appraised with such trained acumen as only long knowledge of men can give to women. He wondered if he were found wanting. * * * Her dark head bended, elbow on knee, chin resting lightly in the cradle of her slender, parted fingers, the woman thought profoundly, her reverie ending with a brief, curt laugh, musical and mirthless as the sound of breaking glass.

"It is so like Calendar!" she exclaimed; "so like him that one sees how foolish it was to trust—no, not to trust, but to believe that he could ever be thrown off the scent, once he got nose to ground. So, if we suffer, my son and I, I shall have only myself to thank!"

Kirkwood waited in patient attention till she chose to continue. When she did "Now for my side of the case!" cried Mrs. Hallam; and, rising, began to pace the room, her slender and rounded figure swaying gracefully the while she talked.

"George Calendar is a scoundrel," she said; "a swindler, gambler—what I believe you Americans call a confidence man. He is also my late husband's first cousin. Some years since he found it convenient to leave England, likewise his wife and daughter. Mrs. Calendar, a countrywoman of yours, by the bye, died shortly afterward. Dorothy, by the merest accident, obtained a situation as private secretary in the household of the late Col. Burgoyne, of The Cliffs, Cornwall. You follow me?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Col. Burgoyne died, leaving his estates to my son, some time ago. Shortly afterward Dorothy Calendar disappeared. We know now that her father took her away, but then the disappearance seemed inexplicable, especially since with her vanished a great deal of valuable information. She alone knew of the location of certain of the old colonel's personal effects.

"He was an eccentric. One of his peculiarities involved the secreting of valuables in odd places; he had no faith in banks. Among these valuables were the Burgoyne family jewels—quite a treasure, believe me, Mr. Kirkwood. We found no note of them among the colonel's papers, and without Dorothy were powerless to pursue a search for them. We advertised and employed detectives, with no result. It seems that father and daughter were at Monte Carlo at the time."

(To Be Continued.)